

what the message of the election was. And because the Democrats were able to do that in a unified fashion, even while being badly outspent and while running against a tide of history that goes back to, really to 1822, they were able to have an astonishing result. And I'm grateful for that.

But I think that people of both parties who care about these issues and want to pull the country together should now put the election behind us, put Social Security reform and education and health care reform before us, and go forward. That's what I want to do.

1998 Election Results

Q. [Inaudible]—the outcome is a vindication of your policies?

The President. I think it is a vindication of the policies and of the general policy of putting partisanship behind progress and of putting people before politics and of trying to find ways to bring people together instead of to divide them. It was clearly a vindication of the message that the Democrats put out there on education,

health care, Social Security and the minimum wage, campaign finance reform, the environment, a number of other things.

A lot of people worked very hard in this election—the Vice President did; the First Lady did; a lot of people did—but I think the American people basically said to all of us—all of us—“We sent you there to work for us, and we want you to find a way to do it, to address the challenges we face and to bring this country together and move this country forward.” I think that was the loud, clear, completely unambiguous message of the election.

Governor-Elect Jesse Ventura of Minnesota

Q. [Inaudible]—the election of Ventura in Minnesota—

The President. I don't know. I think that you're going to have a lot of politicians spending time in gyms now. [Laughter]

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:15 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House, prior to a meeting with the economic team.

Statement on the Russia-United States Agreement on Food Aid November 4, 1998

I am pleased to announce that a U.S. team will begin today to finalize an agreement with the Government of Russia on a program to provide at least 3.1 million metric tons of food. This program will help sustain Russians through a serious food shortage this winter as well as their country's continuing economic distress. In addition, this agreement will bolster American farmers and ranchers who have been hit hard by an agricultural crisis here. We will be pre-

pared to consider additional assistance if necessary.

The program is being developed under the auspices of the binational commission chaired by Vice President Gore and Prime Minister Primakov. Our negotiating team will work with their Russian counterparts to ensure that our assistance is distributed properly and exempted from taxes and customs duties. These are key elements to a successful program.